

Who Is Making Dinner At Qumran?

Hempel, Charlotte

DOI:

[10.1093/jts/fls053](https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/fls053)

License:

None: All rights reserved

Document Version

Early version, also known as pre-print

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Hempel, C 2012, 'Who Is Making Dinner At Qumran?', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 63, no. 1, pp. 49-65. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/fls053>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

Publisher Rights Statement:

This is a pre-copy-editing, author-produced PDF of an article accepted for publication in The Journal of Theological Studies following peer review. The definitive publisher-authenticated version [Volume 63, Issue 1 Pp. 49-65] is available online at: <http://jts.oxfordjournals.org/content/63/1/49>

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Who is Making Dinner at Qumran?¹

Introduction

Food tells us a great deal about people, families, societies and even global narratives. Food also holds a special place in Judaism with implications on central issues such as Jewish identity. Thus David Kraemer observes,

Jewish eating is and has always been a “negotiation”, that is, a struggle on the part of individual Jews and the community over where the boundaries of Jewish identity should be laid.²

Our ancient sources contain several remarkable accounts of individuals and groups set apart by their particular dietary practices that go much beyond the food laws laid down in the Torah, such as Josephus’ former master Banus who foraged for wild foods (cf. *Life* 11) and John the Baptist who dined on locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:4; see also Luke 7:33).

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the *Seminar on Jewish History and Literature in the Graeco-Roman Period* hosted by Martin Goodman and Geza Vermes in Oxford and the *Biblical Studies Seminars* at King’s College London hosted by Eddie Adams and Joan Taylor and at St. Andrews hosted by Bill Tooman. I am grateful to the chairs and various distinguished audiences for stimulating conversations.

² David Kraemer, *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 5.

Moreover, E. P. Sanders includes Josephus' account of starving Essenes (*War* 2.143-144), too scrupulous to eat impure food, as a case study of what he eloquently labels "food extremists".³ The Qumran Community Rule's accounts of a very strictly regulated admissions procedure granting access to the pure food and drink of the community (1QS 6:13b-23 // 4QS^b XI // 4QS^g 3) and the common meal (1QS 6:2c-3, 4b-5 // 4QS^d II // 4QS^g 2a-c // 4QSⁱ) have naturally received a significant amount of attention.⁴ Recent years have witnessed a renewed wave of scholarly interest in the meal practices reflected in the texts found in the vicinity of Khirbet Qumran over sixty years ago.⁵ Moreover, the evidence of these texts is

³ Ed P. Sanders, *Jewish Law From Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM, 1990), p. 24. See also Albert I. Baumgarten, 'Josephus on Ancient Jewish Groups From a Social Scientific Perspective', in Shaye J. D. Cohen and Joshua J. Schwartz (eds.), *Studies in Josephus and the Varieties of Ancient Judaism: Louis H. Feldman Jubilee Volume* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 1-13, esp. pp. 9-10.

⁴ For an outline of earlier discussions with further literature see Charlotte Hempel, 'Community Structures in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Admission, Organization, and Disciplinary Procedures', in Peter Flint and James VanderKam (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 67-92, esp. pp. 84-86 and, more recently, Benedikt Eckhardt, 'Meals and Politics in the *Yahad*: A Reconsideration', in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 17 (2010), pp. 180-209.

⁵ Cf., e.g., Russell C. D. Arnold, *The Social Role of Liturgy in the Religion of the Qumran Community* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp.82-105; Philip R. Davies, *On the Origins of Judaism* (London: Equinox, 2011), pp. 130-140; Eckhardt, 'Meals and Politics'; Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), pp. 77-84; Stephen Pfann, 'A Table Prepared in the Wilderness: Pantries and Tables, Pure Food and Sacred Space at Qumran', in Katharina Galor, Jean-Baptiste Humbert and

often synthesized, first by drawing on several passages from the Scrolls alongside each other, and then by reading the former alongside the accounts of common meals in Josephus' descriptions of the Essenes as well as particular archaeological features unearthed at the site of Qumran.⁶

In the context of the Second Temple period it is almost impossible to overstate the significance of table-fellowship both in early Judaism and nascent Christianity.⁷ As far as early Christianity is concerned the issue of table-fellowship – as part of the larger question of the place of Gentile converts - was one of the key factors that shaped the gradual parting of ways in various Jewish Christian communities (cf. Matt. 15: 1-20; Mark 7:1-23; Luke 11:37-41; Acts 15; Rom. 14:13-17; Gal. 2:12;). Secondly, Jacob Neusner forcefully argues in several publications that,

Jürgen Zangenberg (eds.), *The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 159-178; Dennis E. Smith, 'Meals', in John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (eds.), *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 924-926.

⁶ See, for instance, Bertil Gärtner, *Temple and Community in Qumran: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 10-13, and more recently Smith, 'Meals', Collins and Harlow (eds.), *Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, p. 925.

⁷ Thus, in his study on the synoptic gospels and the law Sanders observes: "Food and purity laws may be placed alongside the sabbath as being especially important.", *Jewish Law*, p. 23. Most recently, see also David M. Freidenreich, 'Food and Table Fellowship' in Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (eds.), *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 521-524.

the Pharisees were (whatever else they were) primarily a society for table-fellowship, the high point of their life as a group. The laws of table-fellowship predominate in the Houses-disputes, as they ought to — three fourths of all pericopae — and correspond to the legal agenda of the Pharisees according to the Synoptic stories.⁸

In addition, both Josephus' descriptions of the Essenes⁹ and Philo's account of the Therapeutae¹⁰ devote an extra ordinate amount of space to descriptions of eating customs, an interest also present in the ancient accounts of the Pythagoreans.¹¹

⁸ Jacob Neusner, 'Mr. Sanders' Pharisees and Mine: A Response to E. P. Sanders, Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991), pp. 73-96.

⁹ See Todd S. Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 57-64; Roland Bergmeier, *Die Essener-Berichte des Flavius Josephus: Quellenstudien zu den Essenertexten im Werk des jüdischen Historiographen* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993); Steve Mason, 'Essenes and Lurking Spartans in Josephus' *Judean War: From Story to History*', in Zuleika Rogers (ed.), *Making History: Josephus and Historical Method* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 219-261; Joan Taylor, 'The Classical Sources on the Essenes and the Scrolls Communities' in Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 173-199 which includes an extensive bibliography; and Geza Vermes and Martin Goodman, *The Essenes According to the Classical Sources* (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1989).

¹⁰ See, e.g., Joan E. Taylor and Philip R. Davies, 'The So-Called Therapeutae of *De Vita Contemplativa*: Identity and Character', *Harvard Theological Review* 91 (1998), pp. 3-24, esp. pp. 18-21.

Given the immense importance of table-fellowship for the emergence of both rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity, an elaborate stage was set for the publication of the Community Rule by Millar Burrows in 1951.¹² Like a much loved promising only child born into an overbearing family, the document barely had a chance to hold its own in the face of a tremendous burden of expectation exerted from various angles. Inevitably, different readers and scholars approached the new primary text by looking for what was most palatable to them – very often Josephus guiding the taste buds.¹³ In what follows I hope to direct our senses to some less explored avenues of interpretation.

Before approaching the evidence of the Community Rule it will be helpful to remind ourselves how scholarly and methodological perspectives have changed in recent years when it comes to the evaluation of the Scrolls and the communities reflected in them. For a long time the Community Rule and its references to eating and drinking were read not only with the baggage brought to the table by Josephus, the New Testament, and rabbinic literature but

¹¹ Justin Taylor, *Pythagoreans and Essenes: Structural Parallels* (Paris: Peeters, 2004), pp. 25-26. Taylor (p. 61) also notes the importance of common meals in Graeco-Roman associations. See also the discussion in John J. Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 79-84.

¹² Millar Burrows with John C. Trever and William H. Brownlee, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery. Volume II Fasc. 2: Plates and Transcription of the Manual of Discipline* (New Haven: ASOR, 1951).

¹³ For some stimulating reflections on comparable methodological issues see Albert I. Baumgarten, 'Prologue: How Do We Know When We Are On To Something?', in Sacha Stern (ed.), *Sects and Sectarianism in Jewish History* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 3-19, esp. pp. 6-9.

also by our perception of the library and the nature of the communities associated with the texts and the site. For many decades few scholars doubted that we could more or less confidently assert that:

- The community who resided at Qumran is the same community described in the Community Rule. More recently this connection is less seamless in light of the re-dating of the communal occupation of the site to the early first century BCE which is difficult to reconcile with the palaeographical date of a mature and developed text such as 1QS (100-75 BCE).¹⁴
- The publication in 1998 of ten at times rather contradictory manuscripts of the Community Rule by Geza Vermes and Philip Alexander muddled the once clear waters even further and has provoked a great deal of scholarly debate ever since.¹⁵

¹⁴ Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, pp. 166-180; Torleif Elgvin, "The *Yahad* is More than Qumran," in Gabriele Boccaccini et al. (eds.), *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 273–79; Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 47-72; and Alison Schofield, *From Qumran to the Yahad: A New Paradigm of Textual Development for The Community Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 13-14 *passim*.

¹⁵ See Philip S. Alexander and Geza Vermes, *Qumran Cave 4. XIX: Serekh Ha-Yahad and Two Related Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); Philip Alexander, 'The Redaction-History of Serekh ha-Yahad: A Proposal', *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996), pp. 437-453; Markus Bockmuehl, 'Redaction and Ideology in the Rule of the Community (1QS/4QS)', *Revue de Qumran* 18 (1998), pp. 541-560; Charlotte Hempel, 'The Literary Development of the S-Tradition. A New Paradigm', *Revue de Qumran* 22 (2006), pp. 389-401; Michael A. Knibb, 'Rule of the Community', in Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. Vanderkam (eds.),

- Some of my own recent publications have stressed that the full manuscript spectrum of the Community Rule defies standardization not at all unlike the un-standardized picture of the emerging biblical texts from Qumran.¹⁶ Whereas contemporary readers cherish authorial and editorial consistency, our ancient Jewish authors and editors were comfortable with contradictions and inconsistencies that naturally arose in the cumulative processes of ancient text production.¹⁷ This radical difference in our concept of authorship is challenging and fascinating in equal measure by offering us the opportunity to uncover snippets of counter-narratives in the nooks and crannies of a larger work.
- Once the communal occupation of the site and the likely composition of texts such as the Community Rule from Cave 1 no longer tally neatly it becomes more difficult to associate particular archaeological features uncovered at the site of Qumran *seamlessly* with particular passages in the texts. The individual dining dishes, the

Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) volume II, pp. 793-797. S. Metso, *The Textual Development of the Qumran Community Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Schofield, *From Qumran to the Yaḥad*; and G. Vermes, 'Preliminary Remarks on Unpublished Fragments of the Community Rule from Qumran Cave 4', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42 (1991), pp. 250-255.

¹⁶ Charlotte Hempel, 'Pluralism and Authoritativeness – The Case of the S Tradition', in Mladen Popović (ed.), *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) pp. 193-208 and *eadem*, 'The Social Matrix that Shaped the Hebrew Bible and Gave us the Dead Sea Scrolls', in Geoffrey Khan and Diana Lipton (eds.), *Studies on the Text and Versions of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of Robert Gordon* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 221-237.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) and earlier literature cited there.

miqva'ot, and the animal bone deposits being particular cases in point.¹⁸ While I am not about to deny the relationship of the texts, including the Community Rule, to the site of Qumran, it is undoubtedly methodologically preferable to look at the literary remains and the archaeological features separately – at least in the first instance.¹⁹

- Finally, Martin Goodman's recent challenge to the almost absolute truth that the Qumran community had turned its back on the Jerusalem temple deserves serious attention.²⁰ This debate is relevant in the present context since a number of scholars have used the notion of a replacement temple as a hermeneutical key to understanding the communal meal at Qumran.²¹

Summing up the series of complicating factors outlined above it has become clear that associating the texts – especially a textual tradition such as the Community Rule which shows clear signs of a complex compositional and redactional history – with a single community

¹⁸ For recent discussion see Magness, *Stone and Dung*, pp. 77-84.

¹⁹ For a stimulating assessment of the relationship of texts to archaeological remains with reference to Jewish ritual baths more widely see Benjamin G. Wright III, 'Jewish Ritual Baths – Interpreting the Digs and the Texts: Some Issues in the Social History of Second Temple Judaism', in Neil A. Silberman and D. Small (eds.), *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 190-214. I would like to thank Ben Wright to making this article available to me.

²⁰ See Martin Goodman, 'The Qumran Sectarians and the Temple in Jerusalem', in Charlotte Hempel (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Texts and Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 263-273, and 'Constructing Ancient Judaism from the Scrolls' in Lim and Collins (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 81-91.

²¹ So, among many, Gärtner, *Temple and Community at Qumran*.

resident at Qumran is currently very much in doubt. Here, Steven Fraade's critique of the approach by Chaim Rabin to Qumran and the Pharisaic *havurah*²² is reminiscent of the picture just painted vis-à-vis the Community Rule tradition and the site of Qumran,

Rabin's book stands as a monument to the pitfalls of the historicist preoccupation with the *singular* identification of groups and their interrelations, often driven by the need to linearly connect the dots (most of which, undoubtedly, are missing)...²³

In what follows I would like to revisit the material on table-fellowship in the Community Rule manuscripts from Caves 1 and 4. Contrary to the customary synthesizing of various passages in the Community Rule I will highlight significant differences between them. On my reading of the evidence only 1QS 6:2c-3; 6:4b-5 // 4QS^d II // 4QS^g 2a-c // 4QSⁱ refer to the consumption of food and drink while 1QS 5:13 // 4QS^b IX // 4QS^d I and 1QS 6:13b-23 // 4QS^b XI // 4QS^g 3 are concerned with the question of access to purity. Given a number of stark differences between the texts both in terms of terminology as well as in substance it is misleading to read one alongside the other.

Eating and Drinking

The Community Rule's only account of a shared meal²⁴ is offered in the context of prescribing the conduct to be followed in all their dwelling places (בכול מגוריהם)²⁵,

²² Cf. Chaim Rabin, *Qumran Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

²³ Steven D. Fraade, 'Qumran *Yahad* and Rabbinic *Hăbûrâh*: A Comparison Reconsidered', *Dead Sea Discoveries* 16 (2009), pp. 433-453, p. 445.

And together they shall eat, and together they shall pray, and together they shall exchange counsel. (1QS 6:2c-3a // 4QS^d II // 4QS^g 2a-c // 4QSⁱ)

And when they prepare the table to eat and the new wine to drink the priest shall stretch out his hand first to bless the first fruits of the bread and the new wine.

(1QS 6:4b-5 // 4QS^d II // 4QS^g 2a-c)

In contrast to the complex admissions process to be discussed below, the shared consumption of food and drink outlined here is procedurally low key. Most aspects of the experience described here reflect standard practice in ancient Judaism such as the requirement to offer a blessing. Whereas the biblical requirement was to offer a blessing after food (cf. Deut 8:10), by early rabbinic times blessings before consuming food and drink appear to be well established (cf. m. Ber 6 and t. Ber 4:1).²⁶ 1QS 6:4b-5 requires a priest to preside over the

²⁴ See Eckhardt, 'Meals and Politics'.

²⁵ On this material see Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community* and Charlotte Hempel, '1QS 6:2c-4a-Satellites or Precursors of the Yahad?' in Adolfo Roitman, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Shani Tzoref (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference held at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem* (July 6-8, 2008) (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 31-40 and further literature cited in both.

²⁶ See Kraemer, *Jewish Eating and Identity*, p. 73; Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Sectarian Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Courts, Testimony and the Penal Code* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), p. 194. For a fuller discussion see Baruch M. Bokser, 'Ma'al and Blessings over Food: Rabbinic Transformation of Cultic Terminology and Alternative Modes of Piety', *Journal of Biblical Studies* 100 (1981), pp. 557-574.

shared meal without laying down the sorts of genealogical specifics that appear important elsewhere in the Rule as well as in 1QSa.²⁷ Finally, the produce to be consumed forms part of a standard biblical diet though oil is often a third component (cf. Deut 7:13). Bread and wine were, in Kraemer's words, "two legs of the Mediterranean triad".²⁸ Most recently Freidenreich also notes that these "staples in Mediterranean antiquity" parallel the two elements of the last supper in the synoptic gospels.²⁹

The Rule of the Congregation closes with the depiction of a Messianic banquet in 1QSa 2:17-22 that is remarkably similar to the account of the common meal in 1QS 6:4b-5 // 4QS^d II // 4QS^g 2a-c, as has frequently been noted by scholars.³⁰ A relationship of some kind between both accounts is reinforced by the closing instruction of 1QSa to proceed according to this statute at every meal where ten are present.

[When] they gather [for the] common table, [or to drink the new] wine, and the common table is prepared, [and the] new wine [mixed] for drinking, [let no] man [stretch out] his hand over the first fruits of bread and [new wine] before the priest; for [it is he who] shall bless the first fruits of the bread and new win[e, and shall] first [stretch out] his hand over the bread. And afterwa[rds] the messiah of Israel [shall str]etch out his hands over the bread. [And afterwards] the whole congregation of the

²⁷ See Charlotte Hempel, 'Do the Scrolls Suggest Rivalry Between the Sons of Aaron and the Sons of Zadok and If So was it Mutual?', *Revue de Qumran* 24 (2009), pp. 135-153.

²⁸ Kraemer, *Jewish Eating and Identity*, p. 78. See, e.g., Luke 7:33.

²⁹ Freidenreich, 'Food and Table Fellowship', p. 522.

³⁰ See, e.g., Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Eschatological Community of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 53-67 and Russell, *Social Role of Liturgy*, pp. 88-90.

community [shall ble]ss, ea[ch (in the order) appropriate to] his honour. It is in accordance with this statute that they shall proceed at every me[al at which] at least ten men [g]ather. (1QSa 2:17-22; Translation M. A. Knibb³¹)

A good indication of the major aspects of the shared meals described in 1QS 6: 2c-3a; 1QS 6:4b-5; and 1QSa 2:17-22 are the verbs used in these related accounts: to reach for, prepare, bless, eat, and drink (שתה, אכל, ברך, ערך, שלח).³² Moreover, key aspects often associated closely with the ‘Qumran meal’ are entirely lacking here such as any explicit concerns with notions of ritual purity and strictly controlled access to food and drink. In a different set of texts from the Community Rule these latter features are indeed paramount, and it is to this evidence we now turn.

Restricted Access to Touching Purity

Several well known regulations in the Rule of the Community are concerned with establishing tightly controlled access to the purity and the pure liquids of the community. Firstly, a set of regulations enforcing a strict separation from the people of injustice includes the prohibition in 1QS 5:13 not to “enter the waters to touch (נגע) the purity of the people of holiness.” A parallel for the second part of the prohibition is preserved in 4QS^b IX: 8-9 //

³¹ Michael A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 153.

³² Most recently Gillihan has independently drawn attention to the importance of this terminology, see. Yonder M. Gillihan, *Civic Ideology, Organization, and Law in the Rule Scrolls: A Comparative Study of the Covenanters’ Sect and Contemporary Voluntary Associations in Political Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 317-334, esp. pp. 323-324.

4QS^d I:7-8 though both of these manuscripts lack the reference to entering the waters.³³ Despite the considerable distance envisaged by the emphatic polemic between the people of injustice and the members of the community, a close reading reveals some clear indications that the people of injustice were extremely influential in some parts of the community. For the option of touching the purity of the people of holiness even to be considered the relationship of the people of injustice to the community as a whole or to individual members must have been extremely close.³⁴ The exclusion of the people of injustice from the purity of the people of holiness stresses the prohibition of *touching* and having access to the purity rather than the consumption of food *per se*. This is clear from 1QS 5:16-17 which permits consuming food and drink provided by the people of injustice as long as it has been purchased (“No one shall eat anything from their property nor drink or accept from them anything at all which has not been paid for”). 4QS^b IX: 6b-13 and 4QS^d I: 5b-13 also include a reference to sharing meals with this group though there are some differences between the various manuscripts in matters of detail.³⁵

The most elaborate set of rules pertaining to the purity and pure liquids of the community is the elaborate admission process described in 1QS 6:13b-23 // 4QS^b XI.³⁶ The key statements pertinent to the present enquiry read as follows:

³³ Cf. Alexander and Vermes, *Qumran Cave 4. XIX*, pp. 53-55 and 93-98.

³⁴ For a fuller treatment of this fascinating passage see Charlotte Hempel, ‘The Community and Its Rivals According to the Community Rule from Caves 1 and 4’, *Revue de Qumran* 21(2003), pp. 47-81.

³⁵ See further Hempel, ‘Community and Its Rivals’.

³⁶ Unless otherwise indicated English translations are my own.

1QS 6:16b-17a	4QS ^b XI (preserving a shorter text) ³⁷
And when he approaches the council of the community he shall not touch the purity of ¹⁷ the many (לוא יגע בטהרת הרבים) until they have examined him with regard to his spirit and his deeds and until he has completed a full year.	¹² [he shall not touch the] purity of the many until [they have examined him]

1QS 6:20b-21a // not preserved in 4QS

He shall not touch the pure liquid of the many (אל יגע במשקה הרבים) until he has completed a second year in the midst of the people of the community.

Rather than outlining a low key shared meal along the lines of 1QS 6:2c-3a and 1QS 6:4b-5 the description here is of a complex, tiered process. The overriding concern is the establishment and maintenance of heavily controlled and monitored access to the purity and pure liquid of the community. In many ways this account is reminiscent of graded access to the inner parts of the Temple in concentric stages.³⁸ Ever since the publication of the seminal study by Saul Lieberman comparing the Community Rule to the rabbinic *havurah*, scholars have often interpreted the terms טהרה and משקה to refer to the pure solid food and the pure

³⁷ See Alexander and Vermes, *Qumran Cave 4. XIX*, pp. 55-57, esp. p. 57.

³⁸ Avemarie p. 220; Florentino García Martínez and Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Writings, Beliefs, and Practices* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 152-157; and Gillihan, *Civic Ideology*, pp. 302, 324. See also Baumgarten, 'Josephus on Ancient Jewish Groups', pp. 7-8, with reference to Josephus' account of the Essenes.

drink of the community.³⁹ While Lieberman allowed for a broader application of the term טהרה both in the Community Rule and in rabbinic literature to include “ritually clean articles (vessels, utensils, garments and particularly food)” he singles out food in particular.⁴⁰ This interpretation of the admission procedure as culminating initially in access to the Community’s pure food is also paralleled by Josephus’ account of the Essenes in *War* 2.139. It was conceivably this parallel which persuaded Brownlee to propose an interpretation along these lines already in 1951.⁴¹ Many subsequent interpreters have translated טהרה and משקה with ‘pure food’ and ‘pure drink’ which resulted in table-fellowship to emerge as the ultimate concern at issue here.⁴² Most recently Friedrich Avemarie and Yonder Gillihan have again stressed the broader aspects of the terminology.⁴³ After offering a full review of scholarship

³⁹ Saul Lieberman, ‘The Discipline in the So-Called Dead Sea Manual of Discipline’, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1951), pp. 199-206; Jacob Licht, *Meghillat ha-Serakim Mi-Megillot Midbar Yehudah* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2006), pp. 294-303; García Martínez and Trebolle Barrera, *People of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 153.

⁴⁰ Lieberman, ‘Discipline’, p. 203.

⁴¹ William H. Brownlee, *The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline: Translation and Notes* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1951), p. 25.

⁴² Florentino García Martínez and Eibert Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) volume I, p. 85; Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Allen Lane, 1997), p. 106; Michael Wise, Martin Abegg and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), pp. 134-135. See also Davies, *Origins of Judaism*, p. 136 and Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran*, pp. 113-116.

⁴³ Friedrich Avemarie, “‘Tohorat ha-Rabbim’ and ‘Mashqeh ha-Rabbim’ – Jacob Licht Reconsidered’ in Moshe Bernstein, Florentino García Martínez, and John Kampen (eds.), *Legal Texts and Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International*

up to 1997, Avemarie endorses a wider understanding of the term purity to cover all personal contact with new members.⁴⁴ He astutely observes that “exclusion from a common meal is a matter of social intercourse, whereas separation from pure food and drink is a matter of purity.”⁴⁵ Occasionally these two spheres both come into play as is the case in the rules restricting contact with the people of injustice in 1QS 5 discussed above.⁴⁶

Finally, the penal code as attested in the Community Rule preserves a number of penalties that refer to an exclusion from the purity of the many, in an apparent reversal of the admission process dealt with above.⁴⁷ Rather curiously according to 1QS 6:24-25 // 4QS^g 3 such an exclusion goes hand in hand with a punishment of withholding a quarter of the food ration.⁴⁸

Organization for Qumran Studies Published in Honour of Joseph M. Baumgarten (Leiden: Brill, 1997) pp. 215-229 and Gillihan, *Civic Ideology*.

⁴⁴ Avemarie, “‘Tohorat ha-Rabbim’”, pp. 226-227.

⁴⁵ Avemarie, “‘Tohorat ha-Rabbim’”, p. 227.

⁴⁶ A comparable concern seems to be alluded to in the fragmentary remains of 4Q514 1 i 10, see Jacob Milgrom, ‘Purification Rule (4Q514 = 4QOrd^c)’ in James H. Charlesworth et al. (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations: Rule of the Community and Related Documents* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), pp. 177-179.

⁴⁷ García Martínez and Trebolle Barrera, *People of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 154. It is interesting to note, also, that the admission process and the penal code share a penchant for a prolonged period of marginalization that is measured in severe cases in annual cycles.

⁴⁸ See also Gillihan, *Civic Ideology*, pp. 323-324.

1QS 6:24b-25	4QS ^g 3
<p>If someone is found among them who lies</p> <p>²⁵knowingly <i>about property</i> they shall</p> <p>exclude him from the purity of the many for</p> <p>a year and withhold a quarter of his food</p> <p>(לחמו)</p>	<p>[If someone is found among them ³who lies]</p> <p>knowingly [<i>about</i>] <i>money</i> they shall ex[clude</p> <p>him from the purity ⁴of the many for a year</p> <p>and withhol]d [a quar]ter of [his] foo[d.].</p>

It was therefore perfectly possible to consume food outside the parameters of the purity of the many. Given the emphasis on touching the purity of the many in the admission process, the most likely interpretation of the exclusion envisaged here is that the touch of the excluded member would cause defilement while the consumption, on his own, of his rations poses no such threat. This interpretation receives further support from the penalty for speaking angrily against one of the priests recorded in the book which specifies that the year-long exclusion from the purity of the many is ‘by himself’ (על נפשו).

An overview over the use of טהרה and משקה in non-biblical Scrolls beyond the Community Rule tradition supports the view that the terminology often has a broader application. Thus, CD 9:21 and 9:23 legislate for an exclusion from the purity on the basis of witness testimony brought to the overseer. Given the Damascus Document envisages a family based covenant community and does not mention communal meals, the reference here is unlikely to refer to common meals.⁴⁹ The penal code of the Damascus Document includes the penalty of exclusion from the purity without any evidence elsewhere in this document that members of

⁴⁹ See Charlotte Hempel, ‘Family Values in the Second Temple Period’ in Katherine Dell (ed.), *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament: God and Humans in Dialogue* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), pp. 211-230 and further literature cited there.

this network of families ate together.⁵⁰ The Cave 4 manuscripts of the Damascus Document prohibit bringing objects defiled through gentile worship, including garments, into one's personal purity (בטחרתו).⁵¹ Similarly, the Temple Scroll prohibits the beautiful gentile war bride from touching the purity and eating the peace offering for seven years (11QT^a 63:14). It is unlikely that she would have survived seven days without nourishment, let alone seven years. While one might argue that pre-sectarian texts such as the Temple Scroll attest a broader meaning of the term *tohorah* than it was to become in the Community Rule, we saw that even according to the Community Rule those excluded from the purity could still enjoy food apportioned to them by the community. The overall emphasis on the act of touching, the complete lack of reference to consuming food together with a much broader meaning of the term *tohorah* in other non-biblical texts strongly suggest that the focus of the admissions process and the exclusions in the penal code is not narrowly on the consumption of food and drink.

The meaning of *mashqeh* in the Scrolls has been particularly illuminated by the publication in 1999 of a series of further halakhic texts by the late Joseph Baumgarten.⁵² Its occurrences in 4QTohorah^a (4Q274) 3 i 6-9 and 4QHarvesting (4Q284a) 1:2-6 make it clear that the term can refer to liquids such as fruit juices which escape while handling fruit rather than pure drink for consumption during a shared meal.

⁵⁰ For a nuanced discussion see Davies, *Origins of Judaism*, pp. 136-139.

⁵¹ 4Q269 8 ii /// 4Q270 3 iii // 4Q271 2, for a composite text and textual notes see Hempel, *Laws*, pp. 59-60. For the official edition see Joseph Baumgarten, *Qumran Cave 4. XIII: The Damascus Document (4Q266-273)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

⁵² Joseph Baumgarten et al., *Qumran Cave 4. XXV: Halakhic Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), esp. pp. 99-109 and 131-133.

In short, a close reading of the tiered admissions process and the penal code, especially seen in the wider context of the halakhic literature from Qumran, make it clear that the purity concerns and restrictions laid down in this material go much beyond the consumption of food and drink. What is at issue is the avoidance of defilement through contact and touch. In her comments on 4QHarvesting Hannah Harrington sums up the message of this composition in the following terms, “The whole process of harvesting must be done in purity. Impure persons and those who are not full members of the sect may not harvest produce.”⁵³ She further draws attention to fragment 2 clearly implying, “that the men of the community will do the harvesting.”⁵⁴ While Harrington is well aware of the much broader process from harvest to consumption emphasized in 4QHarvesting she still favours the standard narrow interpretation of *mashqeh* as ‘communal drink’ when it occurs in the Community Rule.⁵⁵ By contrast, I see no reason to understand the term *mashqeh* in the Community Rule differently from 4QHarvesting and 4QTohorah^a where it refers to physical contact with pure produce. It makes perfect sense to read the regulations on admission as laying down restrictions on touching pure food and utensils and pure liquid (including the juices of ripe fruit) anywhere

⁵³ Hannah K. Harrington, *The Purity Texts* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), p. 63.

⁵⁴ Harrington, *Purity Texts*, p. 63. See also Joseph M. Baumgarten, ‘Liquids and Susceptibility to Defilement in New 4Q Texts’, *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 85 (1994), pp. 91-101, esp. p. 99.

⁵⁵ Harrington, *Purity Texts*, pp. 57-58.

in the process of food production and preparation, serving, and only ultimately consumption.⁵⁶

In their study on Philo's Therapeutae Joan Taylor and Philip Davies offer some perceptive remarks on neglected practical aspects of the communal meals enjoyed by this virtuous and modest community. Taylor and Davies rightly stress the way in which on Philo's account "food seems to appear magically"⁵⁷ – much as it would have done for Philo himself, one may presume. They go on to make some attempt towards "recover[ing] the story of the junior members of the group".⁵⁸ It seems equally unlikely that food appeared magically in the *yaḥad*. Nor does it appear probable that the most recent intake of junior members would be enjoying the privilege of being served by more senior community members. These practical considerations coupled with halakhic texts limiting the harvest to suitably qualified community members further suggest that what is at issue in the admissions process described in the Community Rule is access to the privilege of joining the workforce of junior members eligible to various tiers of menial labour from harvest, to food preparation and serving the meal before partaking of it themselves.

From Quotidian to Ritual and Hyper-Ritualization

⁵⁶ Pfann rightly considers food production as an important aspect in a purity sensitive community, though I see no basis for the claim that "Pure food could only be prepared by pure priests", Pfann, 'Table in the Wilderness', p. 174.

⁵⁷ Taylor and Davies, 'So-Called Therapeutae', pp. 21-23.

⁵⁸ Taylor and Davies, 'So-Called Therapeutae', p. 22.

If we apply some recent research on ritual to these samples of texts we may well ask whether the simple meal can be described as a ritual at all. Since scholars have challenged the notion that ritual refers to a “distinct category of behaviour”⁵⁹ it can be difficult to distinguish ritual from other social activities. David Kraemer paraphrases the notion of ritual as transforming “the mundane into the distinguished”.⁶⁰ Catherine Bell proposes to

use the term ‘ritualization’ to draw attention to the way in which certain social actions strategically distinguish themselves in relation to other actions. In a very preliminary sense, ritualization is a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities.⁶¹

On Bell’s model the simple meal qualifies as a ritualized activity, and I would suggest the more developed and access-controlled admissions process testifies to another level of ritualization which I would label hyper-ritualization. Alongside both of these accounts we also come across several references to the mundane taking of food in a variety of contexts.

What is still open for debate is whether the meal among groups of ten and more is the result of a chance encounter of ten or an occasional planned event. Whatever the case may be, once they were committed to writing, such gatherings would have become something to be aspired

⁵⁹ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 72.

⁶⁰ Kraemer, *Jewish Eating and Identity*, p. 74.

⁶¹ Bell, *Ritual Theory*, p. 74.

to. In any event, we are clearly in the realm of fellowship and a social act of sharing food, and not “the casual taking of food”.⁶²

From the discussion so far it has become clear that the evidence on the Community Rule on the communal meal presents a more nuanced picture than often portrayed. Once we resist the temptation of harmonizing the account of communal meals with the more elaborate admission process, the small table-fellowship groups in the first half of column 6 can be read in light of Seth Schwartz’ analysis of Antiquities 14 where Josephus refers to a series of mostly 1st BCE decrees, spelling out various privileges granted to Jewish communities in the diaspora. Schwartz stresses, “Remarkably, the most commonly mentioned ritual activities are neither prayer nor sacrifice but common meals and fundraising.”⁶³ There is nothing in 1QS 6:3b-4 that would have seemed out of place in an almost global Jewish setting.

I started this article by stressing the tremendous interest scholars – both Jewish and Christian – have long taken in the meal practices attested at Qumran. Larry Schiffman made a strong case quite some years ago to debunk the view that the meal described in the Community Rule is a sacred meal stressing instead the widespread observance of blessings at meals.⁶⁴ In an article that appeared in 2010 Benedikt Eckhardt surveys several theories portraying the Qumran meal as a sacred meal, almost described in sacramental terms, before astutely stressing,

⁶² Kraemer, *Jewish Eating and Identity*, p. 80.

⁶³ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 B.C. E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 221.

⁶⁴ Schiffman, *Sectarian Law*, p. 197.

Given this broad range of grand theories, the evidence is remarkably meagre. 1QS devotes two sentences to the meal; 1QSa 2 is very similar but introduces the “anointed one of Israel” into the ritual sequence – this is all we have.⁶⁵

Many scholars coming to the Community Rule and its references to food and drink consumption have done so with precision guided vision or spectacles:⁶⁶

- Some have their starting point in emerging Christian commensality;
- Others are trying to illuminate the relation of the *Yaḥad* to the rabbinic *havurah* and the relationship of the latter, in turn, to the Pharisees;⁶⁷
- Many scholars, moreover, came to the Rule via or in conjunction with the extensive description of common meals among the Essenes in Josephus.⁶⁸

I would like to couch my concluding reflections with the aid of some recent work on modern genre theory. One of the insights developed in recent genre theory is the recognition that cognitive research tells us humans do not classify categories of things by means of a mental list of features but rather as Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM). Based on the work of George Lakoff it has been stressed that when conceiving of a bird most people work with the Idealized Cognitive Model of a sparrow or a robin rather than a list of features such as wings,

⁶⁵ Eckhardt, ‘Meals and Politics’, p. 182.

⁶⁶ I borrow this term from Michael E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), p. 4 and his concept of ‘spectacles of orthodoxy’.

⁶⁷ For nuanced recent contributions see Fraade ‘Qumran *Yaḥad*’ and Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, pp. 85-87.

⁶⁸ So rightly Eckhardt, ‘Meals and Politics’.

beaks, feathers etc.⁶⁹ It seems to me that much of what has been written about the meals of the *Yahad* is akin to an idealized cognitive model often inspired by external sources – comparable to the dominant role of the sparrow in our perception of what makes a bird - and this ‘sparrow meal’ is the result of a harmonization of two presently quite different approaches to food and food preparation in the Community Rule. Instead, I tried to explore the evidence of the Rule first and foremost from within the wider halakhic Qumran context rather than accessing the text through a rear view mirror (with the vehicle facing either early Christian or early Jewish developments) or relying on the wing mirror displaying the description of the Essenes in Josephus.

I am not saying we should not now proceed to mine the more nuanced picture derived from the Community Rule afresh in light of the evidence of Josephus, Philo and other ancient sources as well as explore its influence on subsequent, and indeed earlier, literary and perhaps also social developments in early Christian and early Jewish sources. The dictum of the late Shemaryahu Talmon to begin by approaching Qumran ‘from within’ still has a great deal to commend it.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ On genre theory and the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as further literature see the articles published in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 17 (2010), a thematic issue devoted to this topic.

⁷⁰ Shemaryahu Talmon, *The World of Qumran from Within: Collected Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989).